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**Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces Funding  
for Natural Disaster Recovery Assistance**

INDIANAPOLIS, July 28, 2008—Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer announced last Friday that \$390 million is available nationwide through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program for landowners and communities to cope with the aftermath of recent floods, fires, drought, tornadoes and other natural disasters.

“USDA employees work shoulder to shoulder with their neighbors at the outset of these emergencies, and remain involved as a member of these communities,” said Schafer. “I’m proud that we follow up with emergency support to recover an area’s damaged watersheds and remove hazards to life and property.”

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the EWP program, which provides technical and financial assistance to address public safety and restoration efforts on private, public and tribal lands. Through sponsorships, NRCS can pay landowners and communities up to 75 percent of the cost of removing debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges; protecting eroded streambanks; correcting damaged drainways; and reseeding damaged areas. NRCS also can purchase floodplain easements on land that qualifies for EWP program assistance.

“In Indiana, we’ve been working on the urgent needs first, those projects with immediate threats to lives and property. Now we’re moving into the longer term emergency EWP work,” said NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. “So far, the urgent EWP needs have been around \$2.5 million. We anticipate an additional \$15 million will be needed for the longer term emergency EWP projects.”

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance through the EWP program, but they must be represented by a project sponsor. Local sponsors include any legal subdivision of state or local government, such as local officials of city, county or state governments, soil conservation districts, etc. Sponsors must secure 25 percent of the costs in cash or approved in-kind contributions. However, in some cases, the EWP program can cover up to 90 percent of the construction costs for projects in limited resource areas.

NRCS employees assess site damages for potential EWP program assistance and help local governments remove the imminent hazards to life and property caused by flooding and erosion.

Producers also can use the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) for financial and technical assistance to restore conservation practices damaged or destroyed during the recent flooding, if they were installed using either program. Indiana NRCS will provide an additional \$1 million of EQIP funds this fiscal year and \$15,000 in WHIP funds for flood damaged practices.

Additional information about EWP is available at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EWP/EWPhomepage.html>. Additional information about EQIP and WHIP is available at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

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